

SRIMADBHAGAVADGITA

**Summary on
Fourth Chapter
by
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SUMMARY

- Note: 1. Portions in brackets are supplied ideas.
2. Numbers in brackets indicate the verses.

(Lord *Kṛṣṇa* dealt with *karmayoga* and *sāṅkhyayoga* in the third and second chapters respectively. These two *yogas* are not newly introduced by *Kṛṣṇa*. It has been initiated by the Lord in the beginning of the creation itself through the *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas*. Thus, this is an ancient wisdom which has stood the test of time.)

Kṛṣṇa begins the fourth chapter by referring to the above aspect so that *Arjuna* will have reverence for *Gītā*. The Lord points out that He initiated the lineage of *Vivasvān* (Lord Sun), *Manu*, *Ikṣvāku*, and others in the beginning of the creation (through the *Vedas*.) It is this same ancient vedic wisdom which is being revived by Lord *Kṛṣṇa* through *Arjuna* in the form of the *Gītā* because it had declined by that time (2,3.)

Now, *Arjuna* wonders how *Kṛṣṇa*, who is his contemporary, can be the initiator of the ancient vedic wisdom (4). As an answer to this question, *Kṛṣṇa* introduces the topic of *avatāra* (5 to 8). [We are born because of our own *karma* (*vyasṭi-karma*) as well as the total *karma* of the world (*samaṣṭi-karma*). In the case of the Lord, His own *karma* is not there. Thus the *karma* of the world becomes the cause for the birth of the Lord.] The evil actions of the wicked and the noble worship of the saints necessitates the manifestation (*avatāra*) of the Lord to punish the former and bless the latter. Thus the Lord establishes *dharma* in the universe (7, 8). But, since this birth is only through *māyā*, it is apparent. Hence it does not affect the true birthless nature of the Lord (6). Moreover, since *māyā* is under the control of the Lord, His omniscience, omnipotence, etc. are not veiled. He remembers all the past (5) as well as His true nature. It is from this standpoint that *Kṛṣṇa* says “I initiated the vedic tradition.”

SUMMARY

From the 9th to the 15th verse, the Lord talks about His true nature and its knowledge. Though the Lord seems to be active, He is free from all activities and their results (13, 14). He is *akartā* and *abhoktā*. One who recognises this nature of the Lord also becomes liberated i.e., becomes free from actions and their results (9). (This shows that the true nature of the Lord and the *jīva* is one and the same.) But, being interested in the pursuit of various types of means and ends, one does not turn to this liberating knowledge- (12). Still, some people manage to become one with the Lord by freeing the mind from attachment, hatred, and fear, by surrendering to the Lord, and by finally gaining Self-knowledge (10). Lord gives whatever the devotee seeks (11).

From the 16th to the 25th verse, *Kṛṣṇa* gives the knowledge of the nature of action and inaction and the characteristics of the person of such a knowledge. Having talked about the rareness of such a knowledge (16, 17), the Lord defines a wiseman as one who sees actionlessness (of the Self) amidst the activities (of the body) as well as (the potential) action in the seemingly inactive body (18).

(The idea is that the wise man accepts activities at the level of body because no one can expect relaxation at the body level. The very process of life is the continuous function of the body. One should only discover inner relaxation even amidst the activities by recognising the true 'I' as the actionless Self. Therefore, true and complete renunciation is possible only through knowledge.)

In fact, the wise man never sees anything other than *Brahman*, that being the truth of all (25). Whether his body is active (20) or not (21), he is not affected. He is self-sufficient, contented, independent, equanimous, and free from fancies, desires, expectations, attachments, and jealousy. His actions are meant for the worship of the Lord which uplifts the humanity (22, 23).

SUMMARY

From the 25th to the 34th verse, the Lord talks about the superiority of knowledge over all other *sādhana*s and the way of getting that knowledge. Various *sādhana*s are compared to *yajñ*a*s*. They are: *Brahmajñāna-yajñ*a, *deva-yajñ*a, *viṣayabhoga-yajñ*a, *dama-yajñ*a, *śāma-yajñ*a, *prāṇāyāma-yajñ*a and *āhāranīyama-yajñ*a. All *sādhana*s lead one to liberation by preparing the mind. But, being the direct means to liberation, *Brahmajñāna-yajñ*a is superior to all (33). To get this knowledge one should approach a *guru* who is established in the Truth (*Tattva-darśī*) and who has the necessary language to communicate it (*jñānī*.) Such a teacher must be approached with humility, faith, and reverence and asked for this knowledge. Instructed by them through the scriptures, one gains knowledge; not otherwise (34).

From the 35th to the 37th verse, *Kṛṣṇa* talks about the benefit of this knowledge. Gaining this knowledge, one will not get into delusion once again. For, he sees everything in the Lord as well as in him (i.e., he recognises his identity with the Lord) (35). By this boat of knowledge one crosses over the ocean of sin however vast it may be (36). Like a blazing fire, this knowledge reduces to ashes (renders inoperative) all the *karma*s (37). Hence, knowledge is the greatest purifier. (All other *sādhana*s can produce *puṇya* which itself is a bondage. Moreover, no other *sādhana* can destroy ignorance which is the root cause of all sins.) That seeker who has purified the mind will soon attain knowledge by the teaching of a *guru* (38).

In the concluding verses (38 to 42), *Bhagavān* talks about the qualifications and disqualifications with regard to Self-knowledge. One who has faith in the *guru* and the *śāstra*, sense-control, and a sincere desire for knowledge will gain the knowledge (39). On the other hand, one who is ignorant, faithless, and doubting is doomed. He cannot enjoy anything in the here or in the hereafter (40). Therefore, “*Arjuna!* Eliminate all doubts regarding the validity of these spiritual pursuits, and resort to *karmayoga*”, advises Lord *Kṛṣṇa* (42).

SUMMARY

Karmas do not bind one who is ultimately established in the doubtless knowledge of the Self (41). This is freedom through knowledge inspite of action — *jñānakarmasannyāsa*.

The topics of this chapter are:

1. *Gītā-stuti* and *avatāra*.....1 to 8
2. Knowledge of *avatāra* and its result9 to 15
3. The wisdom of seeing inaction in action and vice versa
(The characteristics of the wise)16 to 24
4. The glory and the means of knowledge.....25 to 34
5. Benefit of knowledge.....35 to 37
6. Qualifications and disqualifications....38 to 42

Since the renunciation of all activities through the knowledge of the actionless 'I' amidst the activities of the body is the main topic here, this chapter is called *Jñānakarmasannyāsa-yoga*.
